DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 333 PS 019 298

TITLE	Facts about Family Day Care. NCJW Center for the Child Fact Sheet, Number 1.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Jewish Women, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Dec 88
NOTE	3p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Jewish Women, Center for the Child, 53 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010 (free).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Caregivers; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Quality; *Family Day Care; *Income
IDENTIFIERS	Fact Sheets; *State Regulation

ABSTRACT

Three myths concerning family day care are countered by facts. Myths are: (1) family day care providers are just babysitters working for pin money; (2) family day care is an undesirable and inferior substitute for center-based care; (3) the only way to guarantee high quality family day care is through strict regulation. In fact, family day care is a real and demanding occupation, and providers' earnings are often an essential portion of their families' income. Research has shown that family day care has unique qualities that make it the preferred arrangement of many parents, especially for infants and toddlers. Regulation is necessary to provide basic standards concerning the health and safety of children in family day care, but it does not ensure high quality care. Six effective strategies for promoting high quality family day care are cited. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NCJW Center for the Child Fact Sheet, December 1988 Number 1

ED329333

Facts About Family Day Care

WHAT IS FAMILY DAY CARE?

Family day care is child care provided in the caregiver's home, rather than in a day care center or the child's home. It is the most widely used type of out-of-home care for young children in the United States. Virtually all family day care providers are women; the majority are married; and some care for their own young children in addition to the children of others. Many parents are able to arrange family day care services in their own neighborhoods with persons they already know or soon get to know on a personal, informal basis.

MYTHS AND REALITIES

Family day care has been neglected and frequently misunderstood by early childhood professionals as well as by the public. For many years there was a belief that once there were enough "good child care centers," family day care would simply disappear.

This attitude has kept family day care from getting the attention and support it deserves. Family day care has unique characteristics that make it the preferred option of many parents. We hope that this brief fact sheet will clarify some of the common misconceptions about family day care.

MYTH #1: Family day care providers are just "babysitters" working for "pin money."

Traditionally, family day care has not been viewed as a "real" job, but rather as a variation on the traditional female role of caring for children at home. The typically low earnings of family day care providers, and the fact that many are married and dependent upon the earnings of their spouses to make ends meet, have reinforced this view. Moreover, until recently, many states required women applying for family day care licenses to show that they had another source of income from a working husband, social security, or the like. This requirement officially confirmed the second-class status of family day care as an occupation.

REALITY: Family day care is a "real" and demanding occupation. Being a family day care provider "requires the wisdom of a parent, the knowledge of a social worker, the skill of a pediatrician, the tact of a mediator, the patience of a saint; not to mention the savvy of an entrepreneur running a small business." (June Solnit Sale, 1988) Caregivers work longer hours than the parents who purchase their services and assume responsibilities that equal those in more highly paid professions.

The earnings of family day care providers are not merely "pin money." Although the majority of family day care providers do have employed spouses, their own earnings make an important, and often essential, contribution to household income. For significant numbers of providers without other household income, family day care provides a living.

PS 019298

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Chaya Piotrkowski
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

MYTH #2: Family day care is an undesirable and inferior substitute for center-based care.

For many years, family day care was officially treated as a form of custodial care. Licensing for family day care in many states was handled by local welfare departments along with licensing for foster care. This placement in the regulatory system made family day care seem custodial and of lesser educational value than center-based care.

REALITY: Research has shown that family day care has unique qualities that make it the preferred arrangement of many parents, especially for infants and toddlers. Those special qualities include:

- *A familiar, informal home environment;*
- *A small number of other children in care;*
- *Flexible hours;*
- *The consistency of a single caregiver;*
- *The opportunity for a close relationship with the caregiver;*
- *Close proximity to home, school, or place of work;*
- *The availability of care for all children in the family -- infant, toddler, preschooler, and school-age children;*
- *Reasonable prices compared to other options;*
- *A greater likelihood of accepting mildly ill children than other options;*
- *A greater likelihood of accepting special needs children.*

MYTH #3: The only way to guarantee quality family day care is through strict regulation.

Traditionally, regulation, through periodic inspection and licensing, has been government's primary tool for promoting adequate quality child care. However, many family day care providers are exempt from state licensing laws. Others operate outside these laws without fear of detection and, sometimes, without knowledge of their existence.

REALITY: Regulation is necessary to provide basic standards concerning the health and safety of children in family day care, but it does not ensure high quality care. Regulation is effective when used in combination with other methods for establishing high quality care that promote children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

Effective strategies for promoting high quality family day care include the following:

- *Investing in training and other forms of supports for providers;*
- *Subsidizing provider income in order to attract and retain qualified people;*
- *Raising the reimbursement rate for subsidized care;*
- *Educating parents and potential funders about why the costs of quality care are necessarily high, and why investing in it should be a priority;*
- *Educating parents about what to look for in family day care;*
- *Advocating for family day care supports at the city, state and federal level.*

©National Council of Jewish Women, Center for the Child, 53 West 23rd St., NY, NY 10010, (212) 645-4048.
Material from this fact sheet may be quoted freely with proper citation: NCJW Center for the Child, NY, NY. Copies available in bulk from the address above.